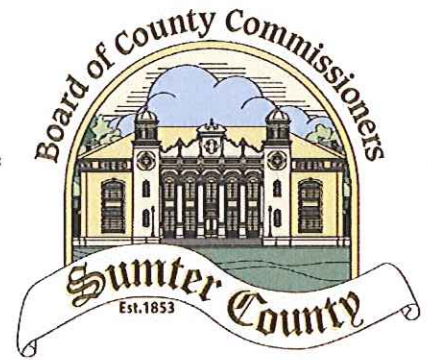


# *Board of County Commissioners*

## *Sumter County, Florida*

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Website: <http://sumtercountyfl.gov>



September 27, 2011

Honorable Representative Marlene O'Toole, Chair  
Honorable Senator Paula Dockery, Vice Chair  
Honorable Senator D. Alan Hays  
Honorable Representative Robert Schenck

RE: Legislative Delegation Meeting

Dear Honorable Delegation,

We recognize there are still some local governments in the State of Florida that choose not to manage their city or county with a fiscal conservative point of view; however, we request that actions you may consider this coming session do not adversely impact those of us who have and continue to manage our local government conservatively. We continue to request that you and the Governor prioritize the services the state provides and make your decisions based on those same priorities. As you move into the 2012 legislative session you will be developing your partnership with Governor Scott to balance the budget. We applaud your past support of elected and public employees contributing toward their retirement and other benefits and encourage further measures to do so.

There are four statutory / funding corrections that we would like to address and request your attending to each one during the legislative session:

1. We request that you resolve past unintended consequence created with the passage of Article V. In 2004, the Clerk of Circuit Court's court budget was changed to a fee based budget under Article V. Because the court budget was operating at an amount higher than the state imposed cap, the Board of County

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Commissioners supplemented the Clerk of Circuit Court's court budget by funding health insurance cost for court employees at the same level the County provides to other County employees. Our FY 11/12 budget includes the funding of \$268,337 to support this cost. There is no statutory requirement for the BOCC to fund this portion of the request; therefore, these costs are actually the responsibility of the State. It is our position that we will not consider this discretionary spending on the County's part for FY 12/13 and look to the State to correct this error.

2. We are seeking your support to resolve the State's Law Enforcement direction. With the reduction in State Patrol presence in Sumter County, the Sheriff has continued to respond to traffic accidents. For our FY 11/12, four traffic operation deputies were funded to manage those traffic accidents that occur in Sumter County which do not involve a fatality. Our support of the Sheriff is directly related to our desire to provide customer service to those in accidents. In the past it would take two to four hours for a State Patrol Officer to arrive on scene to conduct the investigation. A decision needs to occur between the Governor and the legislature on the future of the state's law enforcement operations and the priority of those same operations. From that decision, better local decisions can be made to ensure safety and the appropriate level of customer service prevails in Sumter County.
3. A topic that has led to court cases in other counties is a clear definition of the County's portion of the local match for the state's mandate of funding support for mental health and substance abuse but more specifically the uninsured citizens that are subject to the Baker Act of a specific county. It is not currently defined by factual data or a set formula communicated by the State. A letter (attached) was transmitted to the Attorney General for an opinion but with the amount of cases on this issue with varying answers, action to clarify the state law would be greatly appreciated following the opinion of the Attorney General.
4. The state assumed the role and financial responsibility for persons with development disabilities but has not set a formula of funding for the local agencies that provide the support to those citizens in each county. The Board of County Commissioners has offset the reductions made to SCARC, Inc. but respectfully requests that in meeting the state's obligation that it sets an expectation of funding through a statewide consistent formula.

On the topic of economic development, Sumter County has strong interest in supporting its municipalities in gaining sanitary sewer service or expanding their sanitary sewer service for their existing businesses as well as positioning the industrial corridors with greater capacity and access. We are seeking directed appropriations for funding feasibility studies for this purpose and if the legislature plans to ban them in their entirety, which we would not object, then we will ask for your support for our competitive grant applications.

On a much larger statewide scale is the continued rise in costs especially in the health care area. We suggest the legislature pursue tort reform patterned after the "Texas model" which includes the point that the loser of the court case pays attorney fees and court costs in addition to capping the award amounts to plaintiffs.

As we discussed last year regarding suggested efforts on the part of the state and our own economic development efforts, we encourage your support to move Florida higher on the national rankings of "Best States for Business". Florida was #8 in 2006 and now we are shown as #28 in 2010. The rankings are based on six categories which consist of cost, labor supply, regulatory environment, current economic climate, growth prospects, and quality of life. Business costs that include labor, energy, and taxes are weighted most heavily. The energy component is most certainly the weakest Florida factor in comparison with electrical rates of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina.

We appreciate this opportunity to meet with you as a group and provide our commitment to working with you. We all have the same goal of making the State of Florida an outstanding place to live.

Yours in Partnership,

Don Burgess  
Chairman

XC: Honorable Sumter County Board of County Commissioners